

XIX.—NOTES ON THE STAR TORTOISE
(*TESTUDO ELEGANS*)

Testudo elegans is usually found in the sandy flats at Rameswaram; its food consists of a succulent plant botanically called *Cissus quadrangularis* which usually grows in association with the Euphorbia (cactus) plant.

An adult specimen was kept by me in captivity for more than six months at Rameswaram, and fed on the plant under reference but, owing to the superstitious sentiments of the people, that rearing tortoises at home is ominous to the welfare of family life and to its neighbourhood, I had to do away with it as a donation to the American College at Tallakulam, Madura.

During my collecting tours in North Travancore I have observed a peculiar method, of killing these reptiles for food, practised by the hill-tribes (Paliyars) by thrusting the finger into the anus and when the head of the tortoise is protruded, it is suddenly fixed between the teeth tightly, the body is twisted round and round till the neck has been dislocated, when the carcase is put into the fire and consumed before it is fully roasted.

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XX.—CAPTURING MONITOR LIZARDS AND
PYTHONS

The Monitor lizard to which Mr. Beni Charan Mahendra refers is regarded as a great delicacy by the '*jungli*' coolies of Nagpur, who form the backbone of our labour forces; and they invariably use the methods he mentions to obtain these.

When I was on this garden in 1927 one man, Sonia Oraon, spent a great deal of the time when he was supposed to be hoeing in searching the drain sides in the tea for lizards' burrows. With his hoe he would cut away the earth until the tail was visible, this he seized and dragged the lizard out. After this his method was to maim the poor wretch by breaking the joints of all its legs, thus keeping it alive until he was able to take it home.

On my return after an absence of two years I find that Sonia has grown more ambitious, although naturally such a conservative would not change his methods; he now flies at bigger game and pythons are included in his game register. I watched him catch one which measured 16 feet and which was exceptionally bulky. It was in scrub jungle travelling slowly when we located it; having sent a pal to its front end to attract its attention, Sonia literally dived into the scrub and quickly emerged dragging the snake backwards by its tail. It was then neatly persuaded to place its head in a wire noose, what time another was slipped along its body from the tail end.

The usual method of catching pythons is to throw a long bamboo across them, and roll it along the body to the neck, when, provided